

IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION

NO. 1917

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1886,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,
who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1.*

YOU are well aware, dear friends, that the division into chapters has only been made for convenience sake, and is not a matter of inspired arrangement. I may add that it has been clumsily made, and not with careful thoughtfulness, but as roughly as if a woodman had taken an axe and chopped the book to pieces in a hurry. It was a very unfortunate thing that the axe dropped down just here, so as to divide a passage which ought to have been kept entire. We once heard a friend say, "I have got out of the seventh of Romans into the eighth." Nonsense! There is no getting out of one into the other, for they are one. The field is not divided by hedge or ditch. I thank God with all my heart that since my conversion I have never known what it is to be out of the seventh of Romans, nor out of the eighth of Romans either; the whole passage has been solid truth to my experience. I have struggled against inward sin, and rejoiced in complete justification at the same time.

Our apostle, after having said, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," goes on to say, without any break, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The fact is, that believers are in a state of conflict, but not in a state of condemnation, and that at the very time when the conflict is hottest the believer is still justified. When the believer has to do his utmost even to hold his ground, when he feels that he cannot advance an inch without fighting for it, when he has to cry out in the agony of his spirit because of the vehemence of temptation, he may still lay his hand upon the word of God, and say, "And yet there is no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus." The man who never strives against the sin which dwells in him, who indeed is not conscious of any sin to strive against, that is the man who may begin to question whether he knows anything at all about the spiritual life. He who has no inward pain may well suspect that he is abiding in death, abiding therefore under constant condemnation; but that man who feels a daily striving after deliverance from evil, who is panting, and pining, and longing, and agonizing to become holy even as God is holy, he is the justified man. The man to whom every sin is a misery, to whom even the thought of iniquity is intolerable, he is the man who may with confidence declare, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Souls that sigh for holiness are not condemned to eternal death, for their sighing proves that they are in Christ Jesus.

Observe that the text is written in the present tense. You will lose much of its force and beauty if you leave out that word "now," or regard it as a mere term of argument. This "now" shows how distinctly the statement of non-condemnation is consistent with that mingled experience of the seventh chapter, which certain good people do not appear to understand. The passage describes a conflict which the unregenerate cannot feel, for they neither delight in God after the inward man, nor do they agonize to be set free from the presence of sin. Every child of God must know this conflict if he knows himself. If it had not been for the fierce debates of former ages this passage would have been accepted as an accurate picture of the inner life of the struggling believer, and it would have been held up to admiration as a sure proof of the divine inspiration of the epistle, that with such singular accuracy it records the secret experiences of a soul struggling after purity, an experience which often puzzles the very people who are the subjects of it. Reading my text in that connection, with an emphasis upon the "now," my heart sings for joy. With all my watching, and warring—yes, with all my fears and trembling—yet will I rejoice in the Lord even now, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

I would have you carefully observe our apostle's change of expression. When he is speaking about the inward contention he writes in the first person, and speaks of himself, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." That which might seem humiliating and derogatory he imputes to himself most distinctly, crying out; "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But when he comes to write upon the privileges of the children of God, he does not write in the first person, but he speaks of *them* in general terms—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." His deep humility thus displayed itself. His very self-remembrance is a self-annihilation, he uses himself as lead with which to sink his nets, but his brethren he puts into the place of honor and esteem. His is the confession, and theirs is the confidence, he extols the glorious company of believers, but he lowers himself. This is the style of his language, and the style often reveals the man. He might have said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus," and it would have been true, but it would not have been after the manner of the lowly apostle.

After these wanderings upon the shores of the text, let us now plunge into its depths, and may the Holy Spirit from whom it proceeded bless it to our hearts!

I. I would say, first of all, that this verse contains A REFUTATION OF THE OLD SERPENT'S GOSPEL. "The serpent's gospel," you say, "what is that?" It is another name for the gospel of modern thought—that gospel which casts a doubt upon the threats of the law, and even denies them altogether. Quote the first few words of the text, and stop there, and this false gospel is before you—"There is therefore now no condemnation." The serpent promulgated this gospel in the Garden of Eden when he said, "You shall not surely die." With what greediness our first parents received that highly advanced teaching which contradicted the declaration of God—"You shall surely die!" The doctrine of no punishment for any man is popular at this day, and threatens to have even greater sway in the future. Generally it comes in the serpent's favorite form of "honest doubt"—"Yes, has God said?" Can it be so? Is He not far too merciful? Is it possible that a God of love should condemn and punish His creatures?"

The denial of the penalty attached to sin comes out in different ways, but when put into a nutshell it amounts to this—"There is therefore now no condemnation to any man, however he may live." Some teach that you may live in sin, and die impenitent, but it will not matter, for at death that is the end of you, the soul is not immortal, men are only cooking animals. Others tell us that if you die unforgiven it will be a pity, but you will come round in due time, after a purgatorial period; you may take a little longer road, but you will come to the same end in the course of time. In short, it does not matter how you live, or what you do, you will become perfectly happy in the long run; therefore trouble not yourselves with the exploded notion that there is a heaven to be lost or a hell to be feared. The wrath of God and the judgment to come are mere bugaboos, according to the teaching of our new apostles. This is the gospel according to Satan, a gospel which has already ruined thousands of souls, and is now sealing up millions in a stony-hearted unbelief which enables them to sin without fear. Though these evil doctrines have done incalculable mischief in many places so as to almost paralyze the energies of the church, yet some professed Christians, boastful of their "culture," would move heaven and earth to spread these delusions.

Here is Paul's refutation of this doctrine of a general amnesty—"There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." They would be condemned, every one of them, if it had not been that they are in Christ Jesus, and there is *now* no condemnation to them, solely because they are in Christ Jesus. Their being in Christ Jesus is the great method by which alone they have escaped condemnation. If Paul had only stopped when he had got as far as "there is now no condemnation," every drunkard and swearer and whoremonger would have cried, "Bravo, apostle that is the gospel for us! Now you speak like a man of thought. You have broken loose from the horrible old doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth, and have found for us a 'larger hope.' Hurrah for Paul! He is in advance of his age; he is the man for the times!" But Paul was too honest to court popularity by pandering to man's desire of immunity in sin. He believed the terrible truth that the impenitent sinner is under condemnation, and believing that truth, he spoke it plainly. He did not deal out comfort rashly, catch it who can; but he put it thus—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

It is a work of almighty and sovereign grace, to put men into Christ Jesus; by this method they escape condemnation, but by no other. I understand Paul tacitly to tell us that those who are not in Christ Jesus are under condemnation, and this is a terrible truth. "He that believes not shall be damned" is as much the declaration of our Lord Jesus as that other divine sentence, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." As many as believe not in Christ Jesus, and repent not of sin, have before them at this moment "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation."

It is no pleasant task to us to have to speak of this matter, but who are we that we should ask for pleasant tasks? What God has witnessed in Scripture is the sum and substance of what the Lord's servants are to testify to the people. If you are not in Christ Jesus, and are walking after the flesh, you have not escaped from condemnation.

One alarming fact I must not fail to mention here—the word “now” is as applicable to these condemned ones as to those who are freed from condemnation. It would be true if I were to say, “There is therefore *now* condemnation to all them, that are not in Christ Jesus.” Hear these words, they are the words of John the tender, who leaned his head on the gentle bosom of his Master—“He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed upon the Son of God.” We are said by common talk to be in a state of *probation*, but that is not true; we are all of us in a state of present condemnation, if we are not in Christ Jesus. If you felt the true force of words some of you would start from off your seats at the sound of that sentence, “He that believes not is condemned already.” The sentence has gone out against you if you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. “*Condemned already.*” Think of it, I pray you. You have made God a liar because you have not believed His testimony concerning His Son, and He, on the other hand, has already judged you and condemned you; and this is the most conclusive of all evidence as to the blackness of your hearts, that you have not believed upon the Son of God. There is condemnation for unbelievers, and that condemnation is now.

I must also add that to as many as believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, who walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit, there is nothing but condemnation so long as they remain in that state. It is written, “He that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” That is a terrible text. It is not as though wrath flashed upon you now and then, with the glare of momentary lightning, but a black cloud charged with destruction and tempest continues over your guilty heads till you fly away to Christ. O sirs, I *must* tell you these things. It is as much as my soul is worth to be silent about them. If you think that I find any pleasure in them you misjudge me. I appeal to those who know me—am I morose? Am I without tenderness? No, it is because I love you that I warn you. You shall not perish through any flattering words of mine. I will be clear of your blood. It is idle for me to sew without a needle. There are many new sewing machines, but none that can dispense with the needle. You cannot take silk and sew with that alone, you must have a sharp needle to pierce the fabric, so that the soft silk may follow afterwards. These words of warning are meant to be my needle. May God the Holy Spirit use them as such—to go right through your hearts with the sharp prick of conviction, and so prepare you for the thread of the gospel! “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” but if sin is not forgiven, you are under its condemnation, and if you die in your sins, you will die forever that death which brings with it everlasting woe. If you are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son, you are His enemies, and to be at enmity with God is to be miserable, it cannot be otherwise. How I wish you would feel this truth, and be led by it to escape from the wrath to come before yonder sun shall again go down! God grant you may. I entreat those of you who know the Lord to pray at this moment silently in your hearts that God will awaken the careless, so that under a sense of well-deserved condemnation they may fly to Jesus, and be reconciled to God.

So much for Paul's refutation of the serpent's gospel.

II. And now, secondly, we have in the text A DESCRIPTION OF THE BELIEVER'S POSITION—he is “*in Christ Jesus.*” What does that mean?

I am not going into any deep theological disquisitions; I speak very simply and with a view to practical results. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is in Christ. *By an act of simple dependence* upon Jesus he realizes his position as being in Christ. By nature I am in myself, and in sin, and I am, therefore, condemned, but when the grace of God awakens me up to know my ruined state, then I fly to Christ. I trust alone in His blood and righteousness, and He becomes to me the cleft of the rock, wherein I hide myself from the storm of vengeance justly due to me for my many offenses. The Lord Jesus is typified by the city of refuge. You and I are like the manslayer that was pursued by the avenger, and we are never safe till we pass through the gate of the city of refuge—I mean, till we are completely enclosed by the Lord Jesus. Inside the walls of the city the manslayer was secure, and within our Savior's wounds we are safe. By a humble, simple, undivided dependence upon Him we are placed where we are covered by His merits, and so saved. Noah's dove out yonder, flying over the waste of waters is outside the ark; she will never rest the sole of her foot till Noah puts out his hand and pulls her in unto him; then is she secure, and restful, but not till then. Judge, then, my hearer whether you are in Christ. Do you stand before God on your own footing, or do you rest upon Christ, and find your all in Him? This is not an abstruse prob-

lem, but a plain question. Say, is your righteousness one which you have worked out yourself, or is the righteousness of Christ imputed to you? Do you look for salvation by self, or for salvation by Christ? If you can truly say, “I hide in Christ,” then this text warbles sweeter music than ever fell from angel lips—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Inasmuch as you have believed in Him, you are in Him. “He that believes on Him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;” these are our Lord’s own dear words; treasure them up in your spirits, and rejoice in them forevermore.

Let us go a little deeper. That which faith thus realizes by coming unto Christ for shelter was true before, in a blessed sense. I understand my text, when it says, “*therefore*,” to refer to all that the apostle had argued before in the previous part of his epistle, but even if I did not think so, I could understand his *therefore*, for I believe that the text carries its own argument within itself. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Why “therefore”? Because they are in Christ Jesus. Therefore there is no condemnation to them because they are in Him who can never be condemned. Though it is quite correct to fetch your argument from the preceding part of the epistle, yet it seems to me it is a self-contained verse, and carries its argument within itself. If you are in Christ, there is for that very reason no condemnation in you.

Still, there are other arguments near at hand. Will you at home kindly read the fifth chapter, and you will perceive that believers are in Christ *as their federal head*. By one transgression Adam introduced death into the race, “and so death passed upon all men, for that all had sinned,” but Jesus came to bring life by His obedience. “As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” By Christ’s righteous life and substitutionary death, justification has come upon all who are in Him. As you were in Adam you sinned, and therefore you fell, and were condemned, and as you were in Christ through the divine covenant of grace, and Christ fulfilled the law for you, you are justified in Him. His righteousness and sacrifice have availed for you; “There is therefore now no condemnation.” Because we are viewed by divine justice as under the headship of the perfect Man, who, on our behalf, has magnified the law and made it honorable, therefore we are well-pleasing unto God. We are accepted in the Beloved. It is written, “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” and we enjoy the fulfillment of that promise. Will the Lord condemn those whom He has made righteous? Will He do despite to the righteousness of His own Son wherewith we are covered?

But Paul goes on to show in the sixth chapter that the saints of God are united to Christ *by a living and vital union*. He says of us, “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” We are actually one with Christ by living experience. Beloved, if it is so, that we died in Christ, then we shall not be put to death again for the sin for which we have already died in Him. If we have received a new life in Christ’s resurrection, then that promise is true, “Because I live, you shall live also,” and for that reason we cannot be condemned, for condemnation involves death. We, beloved, who are in Christ, are justified because Christ is justified by His rising from the dead, and by His taking the position of honor and glory at the right hand of God. He is our representative, and we are one with Him, and what He is that are we. Our union is inseparable, and therefore our condemnation is impossible.

In the seventh chapter the apostle mentions our *mystical union* with Christ under the figure of a marriage union—“Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Shall the spouse of Christ be condemned with the world? “Christ loved His church, and gave Himself for it,” shall she be condemned despite His death? This union with Christ is often mentioned in Scripture under the form of a marriage, but it is also described under other symbols: we are one with Christ as a branch is one with the vine, as a stone is one with the foundation, and especially as a member of the body is one with the head. Now it is not possible if I am a member of Christ that I should be under condemnation until He is condemned. Is my head acquitted? Then my hand is acquitted. So long as a man’s head is above water you cannot drown his feet, and as long as Christ, the Head of the mystical body, rises above the torrent of condemnation, there is no condemning even the least and feeblest member of His body.

It has been my joy to preach to you for many years the blessed doctrine of *substitution*. Now, if Jesus became our Surety and our Substitute, and suffered in our stead, it is an inevitable consequence that we cannot suffer punishment, and that the sin laid upon our surety cannot now be laid upon us. If our debt was paid, it was paid, and there is an end of it; a second payment cannot be demanded. You know the story; the very excellent story, which I think was first told by Mr. Moody, of the man who in the French war was drawn for a soldier, but a friend stepped in, and was accepted as his substitute. That substitute served in the war till he was slain in battle. The man for whom he served was drawn a second time, but he declined to serve. He appeared before the court, and pleaded that he had been drawn once, had served in the war by his substitute, and must now be regarded as dead, because his representative had been killed. He pleaded that his substitute's service was practically his service, and it is said that the law allowed his plea. Assuredly it is according to divine equity even if it is not according to human law. No criminal can be hanged a second time, one death is all the law requires; believers died in Christ unto sin once, and now they penally die no more. Our condemnation has spent itself upon our gracious representative. The full vials of divine wrath against sin have been poured upon the head of the great Shepherd that His sheep might go free, and therein is our joy, our comfort, our security. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Bow your heads in worship, you that are in Him. Render an ascription of blessing and praise and glory unto Him who took you unto Himself, and then bore your sins in His own body on the tree, so that you might be delivered from condemnation through His sufferings and death.

Thus, by faith we are in Christ Jesus, and the assurance of our safety is enlarged by a consideration of His federal headship, our vital oneness with Him, our mystical marriage to Him, and His finished work on our behalf.

III. Now we come to the third point, upon which we shall speak briefly, because this part of my text is not a true portion of Holy Scripture. We have before us in this verse A DESCRIPTION OF THE BELIEVER'S WALK—"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You who have the Revised New Testament will kindly look at it. Do you see this sentence there? To your surprise it is omitted, and very rightly so. The most learned men assure us that it is no part of the original text. I cannot just now go into the reasons for this conclusion, but they are very good and solid. The oldest copies are without it, the versions do not sustain it, and the fathers who quoted abundance of Scripture do not quote this sentence. We must admit that it is a gloss inserted in later copies by some penman that was wise enough in his own conceit to think that he could mend the Bible.

Do you ask me, "How did it get into the text?" Remember that there always have been many divines who have been afraid of the doctrine of free justification. They have been half afraid that sinners should get comfort by faith, and should not see the necessity of a change of life. They have questioned the wisdom of ascribing salvation wholly to a man's being in Christ, and so they have guarded the more open passages whenever they have seen a chance of so doing. In so doing they stated truth, but they stated it out of season, and from motives which were unsound. Probably the sentence now before us was put in and allowed to remain, by general consent, in order that the great truth of the non-condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus might be guarded from that Antinomian tendency which would separate faith from good works. But the fear was groundless, and the tampering with Scripture was unjustifiable. We are greatly obliged to our revisers for leaving out the sentence, since it should not be there, and without it the doctrine of justification in Christ is made clearer than in the Authorized Version. In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, service of the same kind is most properly rendered, for instead of, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life," the Revisers have given us a more accurate text, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." In these two cases we have proof that the more nearly the text of Scripture is restored to its original purity, the more clearly will the doctrines of grace be set forth in it. The more we get back to true Scripture, the more shall we escape all interference with the complete and perfect salvation which comes of our being in Christ. We are not justified by the manner of our walk, but by our being in Christ Jesus.

Again, you ask me, "Where did the man who made the gloss get his words from? The words are so good and true that they read like inspiration." Just so. The words are borrowed from the fourth verse. The Holy Spirit meant to say this very thing a little further on, in its proper place, but the good men who felt it right to tamper a little with the document must necessarily make Him say it sooner, and therefore they copied the last sentence of the fourth verse and placed it here—"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Truly, there was not much hurt done, for the words are true, but no man has a right to

add to Holy Scripture or take from it, and I fear that many may have been brought into needless bondage by this sentence being inserted where the Holy Spirit did not place it. Beloved, when you desire to know your state, be content with this question—"Am I in Christ?" And if you can answer it from your heart, let it satisfy you, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Others may better judge your walk than you can judge it yourself, but your union with Christ is best known to yourself.

Still, the interpolated sentence is true; the man who is in Christ Jesus does not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Suppose me to be now preaching upon verse four.

We notice that such a man in Christ has received the Holy Spirit, for he walks according to His guidance. All honor and worship be unto the third most blessed Person of the Divine Trinity, that He should deign to dwell in our poor hearts and sanctify our spirits to Himself. Every believer has the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, every believer has been quickened into the possession of a new nature called *the spirit*. He has a right spirit within him, a new spirit, a holy spirit—the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is a new creature; he is no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit, and so he has become a spiritual man.

Observe carefully that the flesh is there; he does not walk after it, but it is there. It is there, striving and warring, vexing and grieving, and it will be there till he is taken up into heaven. It is there as an alien and detested force, and not there so as to have dominion over him. He does not walk after it, nor practically obey it. He does not accept it as his guide, nor allow it to drive him into rebellion. The man who is in Christ Jesus commits himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What a wonderful power is that which dwells in every believer, checking him when he would do wrong, encouraging him to do right, leading him in the paths of righteousness for Christ's name's sake! Happy men to have such a Conductor!

Judge you yourselves in which way you are walking. Are you walking according to the flesh? Do you do whatever you like to do? Do you believe whatever you like to believe? Do you say to yourself, "I am not going to be limited by Scripture, nor by rules of holiness; these are too old-fashioned and strait-laced for me"? Then, you walk after the flesh; you are your own guide, your own wisdom and righteousness, and vain desires conduct you where they will. You are blind, and your guide is blind, and you will soon fall into the ditch. You think not so, but time will prove my words.

Blessed is that man who no longer follows the devices and desires of his own heart, and no longer trusts to his own understanding. Blessed is he who bows his mind to the mind of God. My own desire is not to believe what I may imagine, or invent, or think out, but I would believe what the Lord God has taught us in the inspired Scriptures. I submit myself to the guidance of the Spirit of God in connection with the written word. This is safe walking.

Combine the two descriptive clauses of my text. On the one hand look to Christ alone, and abide in Him, and then, on the other hand, look for the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is to be in you. By faith we are in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is in us. All who can go with me in this are delivered from condemnation, for how shall he be condemned that is in Christ? And how shall he be condemned that has the Holy Spirit within him? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

IV. And so I come, in closing, to notice THE ABSOLUTION OF THE BELIEVER, "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus." What a grand sentence! I call upon you to notice it. You may have seen a well-painted picture called "Waiting for the Verdict." What interest is displayed on every face! What fear and trembling upon the countenance of the prisoner! In his wife and the friends around him what anxiety is seen! "Waiting for the Verdict" is a sad picture, but what another might be drawn of, "The Favorable Verdict Received." The prisoner is acquitted! Oh what joy! It is not possible to bring in a verdict of "Not Guilty" for you and for me, for we are undoubtedly guilty, but yet it is possible by the processes of substitution and divine grace to bring in a just verdict by which it is witnessed that "There is now no condemnation."

Notice, first, that this is a *bold speech*. "There is no condemnation." "But you said just now that the thing you would not that you did." Yes, but there is no condemnation. The same lips which made such a humble confession and revealed such a troublesome experience now assert positively and joyfully "There is no condemnation." Free grace makes men speak bravely when their faith has a clear view of Jesus.

Though it is a bold assertion, *it is proven*. Whenever a man has a "therefore" at the back of what he has to say, he may say it without stammering. "There is *therefore* now no condemnation." Paul is always

a reasoner and a great logician. Here he seems to declare his certainty. "What I say I can prove. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and I can prove it to a demonstration." Brethren, the demonstrations of mathematics are not more clear and certain than the inference that if we are in Christ, and Christ died in our stead, there can be no condemnation for us. Cool calculation may be used here. This is no raving of fanaticism, but the unquestionable deduction of fair argument—if Jesus was condemned in my stead, there can be no condemnation for me.

What a *broad assertion* it is!—"There is *no* condemnation."—No condemnation on account of original sin, though the believer was an heir of wrath even as others. No condemnation for actual sin, though he greatly transgressed and came far short of the glory of God. He is in Christ, and there is no condemnation of any sort possible to him. No condemnation, no, though he humbles himself and weeps and groans before God because in thought and word and deed he still offends. No condemnation, though he feels that he has not yet attained to the excellence which he labors after.

The devil says there is condemnation, and therefore he accuses us day and night. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies! Conscience sometimes censures us, for even conscience itself needs to be enlightened and to be purged from dead works. But when conscience understands the plan of free grace and sees things in the light of truth, it also bears witness, and the Spirit of God bears witness with it, that we are the children of God. "No," says the apostle, "there is no condemnation." What a broad sweep these words take! If you read to the end of the chapter you see how unreserved Paul was in his statement, for there he mounts the high horse, and cries, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again." Paul makes all heaven and earth and hell to ring with his daring challenge, "Who is he that condemns?" In the broadest imaginable terms he declares that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Where there is no condemnation there is no wrath, no guilt, no punishment. On the contrary, there is acceptance, favor, and bliss.

This, beloved, is an *abiding statement*, a standing assertion. It was true of me thirty years ago as a believer, and it is just as true of me now. It was true in Paul's day, and though centuries have passed away, it is just as true at this moment. If you are in Christ Jesus there is *now* no condemnation. That living *now* goes singing down the centuries; in life, in death, in time, in eternity, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

What a *joyful statement* it is! It makes one laugh for joy of heart. If you have ever been burdened with a sense of sin you will know the sweetness of the text. You that are not sinners, you good respectable people who are sailing to heaven in your own ship, there is nothing in it for you. Gospel assurances are not for you; you would not prize them, and therefore you have neither part nor lot in them. For, Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. But you that have been whipped of the devil and dragged at the heels of your sins, you that have been broken and crushed as in a mortar, with a pestle, till you are ground fine under the hand of conviction, you are the people that will leap for joy as you hear the silver trumpet ring out the note of "no condemnation." Come, let us be glad. Let us rejoice together because there is now no condemnation to us. When Giant Despair's head was cut off, Mr. Bunyan says that the pilgrims danced, and well they might. Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-Afraid took a turn, and even Ready-to-Halt with his crutches must necessarily join in. I guarantee you he footed it well. When he saw the monster's head upon the pole he could not help being merry. This text sticks the giant's head up on the pole for us. "There is therefore now no condemnation." Oh for the loud sounding cymbals! Now for the maidens and their timbrels. Let us have holy merriment over this. Poor prodigal sinners have fled to Jesus and hidden in Him, and there is now no condemnation to them. Poverty? Yes, but no condemnation. Depression of spirit? Yes, sometimes, but no condemnation. Infirmities and weaknesses, and things to grieve over? Yes, plenty of them, but no condemnation. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"

"All very well," says one, "but we would like something practical." Practical! This is *the most practical thing that ever was*, because the moment a man receives this assurance into his soul his heart is won to his loving Lord, and the neck of his sinfulness is broken with a blow. There never was, yes, never can be, a man that has realized by the witness of the Holy Spirit that he is free from condemnation who will ever go to love sin and live in it. While I am condemned I say, "Well, if I am to be sent to hell for my sin I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and therefore I will continue in sin, and get what pleasure I can out of it." Do you not know how the guilty man often feels, that since there is no hope for him, he may as well harden his heart, and enjoy himself? A mouse was caught in a trap, the other day,

by its tail, and the poor creature went on eating the cheese. Many men are doing the same; they know that they are guilty, and they dread their punishment, but they go on nibbling at their beloved sins. They remind me of the soldier in the old classic story. The army marched through a certain country, and the commander-in-chief ordered that there should be no plundering, not a man must touch a bunch of grapes in going through the vineyards, or he should die for his disobedience. One soldier, tempted by a bunch of grapes, plucked it, and began to eat it. He was brought before the captain, who declared that the law must be carried out, and the thief must die. He was taken out to die, and though he knew his head would be cut off, he went on eating the grapes as he walked along. A comrade wondered that he should do this, but the condemned man answered that no one ought to grudge him his grapes, for they cost him dear enough.

Such are the bravados of sinners. The breasts of wicked men are steeled rather than softened by a sense of condemnation, but once let the Holy Spirit remove the burden of their guilt, and they will be dissolved by love. Free pardon is a great conqueror. The love of Jesus soon makes men turn from sin with burning hatred. Forgiving love is a main instrument in transforming men from rebels into friends. You may preach the demands of the law as long as you like, and tell men that they must merit salvation, and you will only make them worse and worse. But go and proclaim the dying love of Jesus; tell them that free grace reigns, and that undeserved mercy saves the sinner through faith in Christ, and that the moment he believes in Jesus there is no condemnation to him, and you shall see miracles accomplished. In the experience of free grace you have something to work upon, you have put a new affection into the man, and it will drive out his base affections. A life force is communicated to him, which will cause him to forsake his old ways and turn unto the Lord. “How do you know?” says one. I know by experience and by observation. I could point you out many specimens of the power of divine grace in this assembly, but I will not do so. If I were to say, “Brothers and sisters, you who once lived in sin but have escaped from it through free grace and dying love, stand up!” What an exceedingly great army would start to their feet! Yes, we know it is true, for the lips of many witnesses declare it; they say, “Jesus saved us from the worst of sins, and made us His friends by His free grace, and now we rejoice to love and serve Him.” So shall it be with you, dear hearer, if you also believe in Jesus. The text shall be true of you also—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” God bless you! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 7:14-25; 8:1-18.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 329, 397.**

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